

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7997

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0699

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM BEING REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO/ACTION:

SENT ACTION BANGKOK - INFO AMCONSUL VIENTIANE, JAN. 11, 1977

QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L UDORN 0007

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, PFOR, TH, LA

SUBJECT: REFUGEE PILOT DESCRIBES ACTIVITIES IN LAOS

REF: (A) BANGKOK 0268 (B) UDORN 0006

SUMMARY: LAOTIAN REFUGEE PILOT WHO FLED TO THAILAND DEC 30
VISITED CONSULATE JAN 6 TO REQUEST ADMISSION TO US. DURING
LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL HE PROVIDED SOME INTERESTING
COMMENTS REGARDING HIS FLYING ACTIVITIES, PRESENCE OF VIETNAMESE
TROOPS, RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES, THAI STUDENTS, SOVIET PERSONNEL,
AND MORALE OF VIENTIANE POPULACE. END SUMMARY.

1. LAOTIAN REFUGEE PILOT 2LT SONE KASINGTO, WHO FLEW C-46
TO UDORN RTAFB DEC 30 (REF A), VISITED CONSULATE JAN 6 TO
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REQUEST REFUGEE PAROLEE STATUS FOR ADMISSION TO US, SONE IS
A NATIVE OF VIENTIANE AND FORMER LAO AIRWAYS CIVILIAN PILOT
WITH 9700 HOURS FLYING TIME IN C-46, C-47 AND C-123 AIRCRAFT.
SINCE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN LAOS HE HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO LPDR
AIR FORCE AS PILOT TO C-123 TRANSPORT SQUADRON STATIONED
AT WATTAY AIRPORT. HE WAS PRECEDED TO THAILAND BY THREE
FORMER FLAF PILOTS, WHO ARE ALSO FROM C-123 SQUADRON.

SONE COMMENTED ON A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS.

2. FLYING ACTIVITIES - SONE CLAIMED HE MADE 1 HOUR 35 MINUTE FLIGHT TO HANOI SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK, SOMETIMES DAILY, USUALLY TRANSPORTING LAO MILITARY OR CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ON TRAINING ASSIGNMENTS OR OFFICIAL BUSINESS TO VIET-NAM. ON RETURN TRIP TO VIENTIANE HE USUALLY CARRIED FOOD, FUEL AND OCCASIONALLY SOME MEDICINE OR SIMILAR SUPPLIES. ONCE, SEVERAL MONTHS AGO HE TRANSPORTED 5 TONS OF M-16 RIFLES FROM HANOI TO VIENTIANE, HE NOTED HOWEVER THAT AS GENERAL RULE MILITARY SUPPLIES SENT TO LPDR FROM HANOI ARE DISPATCHED ON SOVIET AIRCRAFT. IN ADDITION TO HANOI HE ALSO FLEW FREQUENTLY TO SAM NEUA, XIENG KHOUANG, PHONG SAVAN, SAVANNAKHET AND PAKSE. HE CLAIMED THAT PHONG SAVAN AIRFIELD HAS NOT YET BEEN EXPANDED AND OBSERVED ONLY SMALL NUMBER OF RUSSIAN TECHNICIANS STATIONED THERE. HOWEVER HE NOTED THAT XIENG KHOUANG AIRFIELD HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY EXTENDED TO EQUAL THE LENGTH OF RUNWAY AT WATTAY BUT THAT NEW EXTENSION HAS NOT BEEN PAVED AND WORK ON AIRFIELD HAS BEEN HALTED FOR NEARLY A YEAR.

3. PRESENCE OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS - SONE ASSERTED THERE IS LARGE CONCENTRATION OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS DEPLOYED AT SENO, NORTHEAST OF SAVANNAKHET, ADDING THAT WITHIN LAST MONTH HE HAS SEEN "MANY VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS IN MARKET PLACE AND CINEMA IN SAVANNAKHET ITSELF, HE INDICATED THAT NUMBERS OF VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS IN SAVANNAKHET AREA APPEAR TO HAVE INCREASED NOTICEABLY DURING LAST

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THREE MONTHS. SONE SAID HE HAS ALSO SEEN VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS AT PHONG VIENG, MARKET TOWN FOR PHONG SAVAN AIRFIELD AND HAS PLAYED VOLLEYBALL WITH "MANY" VIETNAMESE MILITARY PERSONNEL QUARTERED IN OLD USAID KM-6 COMPLEX, OUTSIDE OF VIENTIANE.

4. LAO RESISTANCE - SONE SAID MOST PROMINENT RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES ARE TAKING PLACE IN SAYABOURY PROVINCE, ONG TIENG AND MUONG MOC AREAS, XIENG KHOUANG PROVINCE AND SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE. HE STATED AMMUNITION AND RICE FLIGHTS TO SUPPORT PL FORCES ENGAGING RESISTANCE UNITS IN THESE LOCATIONS DEPART WATTAY AIRPORT SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK. HE SAID THAT RICE DROPS TO PL SOLDIERS IN MUONG MOC AREA ARE AVERAGING 15 TONS A DROP. HE ADDED THAT WHEN FLYING TO XIENG KHOUANG AIRFIELD FROM VIENTIANE HIS FLIGHT INSTRUCTIONS FORBID HIM TO FLY UNDER 9500 FEET TO AVOID POSSIBLE FIRE FROM RESISTANCE ELEMENTS. HE SAID THAT ROUTE 13 FROM VIENTIANE TO PAKSE REMAINS INSECURE FOR PL MILITARY PERSONNEL AND VEHICLES. HE ADDED THAT, AC-

CORING TO REPORTS FROM FRIENDS, UNTIL RECENT DEPLOYMENT OF ADDITIONAL VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN SENO AREA, PL PERSONNEL WOULD NOT VENTURE MORE THAN FOUR OR FIVE KILOMETERS OUTSIDE OF SAVANNAKHET TOWN DURING DAY OR NIGHT. SAVANNAKHET-SENO ROAD IS NOW SUPPOSEDLY SECURE DURING DAYTIME HOURS.

5. THAI STUDENTS - SONE SAID HE SAW FOUR THAI STUDENTS IN SAM NEUA LAST MONTH BUT HAS SEEN THEM NOWHERE ELSE. HE ADDED HOWEVER THAT HE HAS HEARD THAT LARGE NUMBER OF THAI STUDENTS ARE IN TRAINING CAMP LOCATED NORTH OF VIENTIANE AT PHOU KHAU KHOAY.

6. SOVIET ADVISORS/TECHNICIANS A SONE HAS OBSERVED MANY SOVIET ADVISORS AND TECHNICIANS AS WELL AS PILOTS AT WATTAY BUT THEY KEPT THEMSELVES APART FROM FORMER FLAF PERSONNEL, ASSOCIATING ON A LIMITED BASIS ONLY WITH PL
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PERSONNEL. HE STATED THAT ABOUT 70 PL PILOTS AND CREW MEMBERS DEPARTED FOR TRAINING IN MOSCOW IN NOVEMBER.

7. AIRCRAFT SPARE PARTS - SPARE PARTS FOR FORMER US AIRCRAFT HAVE NOT BECOME A CRITICAL PROBLEM AS YET BECAUSE LPDR CAN PURCHASE THEM IN HONG KONG. HE SAID AN AIRCRAFT IS SENT THERE ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH FOR PARTS PICK-UP.

8. REASON FOR LEAVING/MORALE OF PEOPLE - SONE SAID THAT HE FLED LAOS BECAUSE OF DETERIORATING LIVING CONDITIONS IN VIENTIANE, HIS FEAR OF BEING SENT TO SEMINAR UP-COUNTRY AND INCREASING REGIMENTATION OF LAO SOCIETY UNDER LPDR. AS EXAMPLE OF LATTER, HE CLAIMED THAT HIS FATHER, A FARMER, HAS TO OBTAIN WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM VILLAGE CHIEF TO KILL EVEN ONE OF HIS CHICKENS FOR SALE IN MARKET. 2LT SONE SAID MORALE OF BULK OF VIENTIANE POPULACE IS LOW, NOTING THAT MANY MORE PEOPLE WOULD FLEE TO THAILAND, INCLUDING ADDITIONAL FORMER FLAF PILOTS, IF THEY WERE NOT ENCUMBERED WITH FAMILY OBLIGATIONS.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SONE APPEARED TO BE SINCERE AND TRUTHFUL, POST'S EXPERIENCE IN INTERVIEWING REFUGEES SEEKING ADMISSION TO US IS THAT THEIR INITIAL COMMENTS SHOULD BE TREATED WITH CAUTION. THEY ARE USUALLY ANXIOUS TO INGRATiate THEMSELVES WITH U S INTERVIEWER: CONSEQUENTLY THEY HAVE TENDENCY TO EMBELLISH OR SOMETIMES EVEN FABRICATE INFORMATION REGARDING SUBJECTS WHICH THEY THINK MAY BE OF INTEREST OF US PERSONNEL. THAI ARE EXTENSIVELY DEBRIEFING ALL FOUR PILOTS, PARTICULARLY REGARDING LPDR AIR FORCE.

FINNEY
UNQUOTE:
WHITEHOUSE

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